

SPiRiT OF THE PRESS.

EDITORIAL OPINIONS OF THE LEADING JOURNALS UPON CURRENT TOPICS—COMPILED EVERY DAY FOR THE EVENING TELEGRAPH.

Work or Play?

From the N. Y. Times.

Our national legislators may find leisure, during the holidays, to determine the course to be pursued when these come to an end. There is evidently much to be done upon the subject. We have charitably supposed that the listlessness evinced since the session opened was a mere ante-Christmas accident, to be atoned for after the 5th of January by downright hard work. On no other hypothesis did it seem possible to explain the procrastination and neglect which have been apparent in regard to every important subject. It seems, however, that what we supposed to be accidental really was intentional on the part of many, and that the trifling witnessed these three weeks is to be continued through the remainder of the session. "Nearly all the leading members," writes our Washington correspondent, "are of the opinion that nothing is actually necessary at this session beyond the Appropriation bills."

We hope that "the leading members," and the members who are not "leading," will return from their home visits with a different impression. The prevailing opinion among the people is that a great deal is actually necessary this session to meet urgent wants, and to institute reforms which cannot be deferred until another session without grievous injury and wrong. It is not enough that General Grant has been elected President, and that his friends will be sufficiently strong in the next Congress to give effect to the reforming measures of his administration. The fact is satisfactory so far as it goes. But it furnishes no excuse for negligence on the part of the present Congress. It has a duty to perform wholly independent of the next President, and the duty of providing legislation that is needed now, of doing a work that is expected now, of inaugurating those measures of improvement and relief which are requisite now, and which the new Administration should complete and execute.

Mr. Colfax expressed the popular demand the other night at Philadelphia, when he pledged the Grant administration to "the most searching retrenchment; honesty, efficiency, and higher character in all connected with the public service; rigid guardianship of the Treasury against unwise and extravagant schemes; a financial policy which shall maintain our credit unimpaired, appreciate our currency, and place us on the firm rock of specie payments." The programme is too comprehensive to be realized in the seven or eight weeks which will remain of the present session. But there are portions of it which are practicable, and to these members should apply themselves on reassembling, if they would not scandalize their party and do injustice to the country.

Appropriation bills are confessedly necessary, even in the opinion of "leading members." Their policy of laziness does not extend to the voting away of money. The task of providing for the national expenditures, however, presupposes considerable attention to the expenses to be covered. Retrenchment, therefore, is at this moment in order; not a hasty cutting down of estimates, to be hereafter amended by deficiency bills, but a thorough and careful reduction of expenses, with a due regard to the requirements of the public service. Mr. McCulloch has shown not only that a large saving is possible in almost every department, but that it is essential to prevent higher taxation. Here, then, is one work so actually necessary that it cannot be postponed with safety.

The public credit, too, calls for immediate attention. It cannot be improved by any mere theorizing on the subject of resumption. Schemes relating to that subject are well in their way, and perhaps necessary; but whatever be the policy of the incoming administration, it is in the power of the present Congress to accelerate resumption simply by bettering the condition of the Treasury. To do this we must have retrenchment accompanied by an increased productiveness of the revenues, as the result of increased efficiency and integrity in the internal revenue service and of an intelligent and just revision of the customs' duties. Not only has the latter object been thus far neglected, but its attainment has been rendered more remote than ever by the favor shown towards changes in the direction of monopoly. If the national credit is to be strengthened, prohibitory duties will have to be discarded and duties adjusted with a view to productiveness put in their place. The fondness for doing little or nothing may seduce members into the neglect of the thing most wanted; but at least they may be asked not to make matters worse by piling up obstacles at the instance of a few impetuous interests.

The virtue of denial ought to be pushed yet further. The "rigid guardianship of the Treasury," which Mr. Colfax promises, is a duty quite as incumbent on and after the 5th of January as on and after the 4th of March. Unless fulfilled in the intervening period, brief though it be, the damage to be done. Magnificent schemes are already on the carpet. One project has been started which alone would bankrupt the Treasury, and others little less dangerous are spoken of as in preparation. Whether these come in the shape of claims to be paid, or of aid to be rendered to enterprise, or of the acquisition of territory, but one safe course is open. All should be rejected. But even the rejection of these and similar projects implies greater vigilance and a keener appreciation of public necessities than have yet been apparent.

We would not mar the holidays by fruitlessly complaining. Congress is made up of mortals, who are not required to forswear joyment. If they would relish it honestly, however, and disport themselves with a good conscience, we recommend them to resolve upon disregarding those "leading members" who would consecrate the remainder of the session to serene self-contemplation instead of rough and patient work.

Babes in the Wood.

From "Brick" Pomeroy's N. Y. Democrat.

The other day, in Mississippi, a wandering carpet-bagger from Rhode Island, by the name of Williams, who had enlisted in the heavenly guerrilla business, and who for some time has been wandering about that State preaching religion and talking politics to the colored population, was found in a barn sleeping on a pile of corn-stalks, by the side of an Ethiopian damsel, the two locked securely in each other's arms. By their side was a whisky bottle, which the day before had been emptied of whisky and filled with bed-bug poison, without a proper label, and stood upon a shelf in the pantry. The guerrilla and the virgin had taken a drop or two too much of the aforesaid inducement, and instead of taking a little snooze together while he converted her in the aforesaid lot of the aforesaid barn, the pair of beauties had played babes in the wood, and gone down the valley of death, linked together. We sympathize with New England in her bereavement, and suggest the erection of a monument to the martyr. In life they

were together, and in death it was not deemed advisable to separate them; so the white and black, loved and loving, guerrilla and damsel, were dropped in one hole together. Had this been before election, it would have been put down as a Ku-Klux outrage! Now folks can say that the "spirit" was too willing, and the flesh was weak! For in such an hour as you think not, no man, nor woman, can stand too much bed-bug poison. They have gone. Brethren, let us pray.

How to Stop the Leaks.

From the N. Y. Tribune.

The clouds which still overcast our national sky are mainly financial; and General Grant's administration will prove a triumph or a failure according as he shall demonstrate ability or inability to reduce the burden of the national debt. Its first need, therefore, is retrenchment in public expenditure; but its second, and scarcely inferior, is to enhance the national income by putting an end to the gigantic frauds which have for years reduced the revenue from fifty to one hundred and fifty millions per annum.

How shall this be done? We expect something from the passage of Mr. Schenck's general bill, and something more from a general infusion of honesty and vigor into the service consequent on the accession of General Grant. But there is a more specific means of operating to this end, which seems to us worthy of consideration. Here is its outline:—

Assuming that a first-rate Secretary of the Treasury is assisted by an equally fit Commissioner of Internal Revenue, we hold that the proper district officers should be held accountable for the success or failure of their efforts to assess and collect the internal revenue after this fashion:—

Brown, we will suppose, is assessor of a specified district, and Joseph collector. The Commissioner should give them fair notice that they must secure to the Government the internal revenue rightfully collectable from that district, or must give place to successors. Each, when appointed, should be distinctly told, "The fair, honest cost of whisky in your district is (say) \$1.25 per gallon; we shall keep strict watch over it, and whenever we find any selling therein for \$1.10 or less, we shall want your office for another man." So of tobacco; so of other heavily taxed articles. If a person cannot collect the revenue, that is reason enough for letting some one else try in his stead. "Angers that won't burn" are out of place in such a service; they must give place to such as will. Only let the assessor and collector know that, whenever the prices current prove them unable to do the work for which they are paid, they must get out, and what are now moral impossibilities will soon sink into mere difficulties, and then fade away altogether. At all events, we trust this plan will receive fair consideration.

"Buttons, You Be Blowed!"

From the N. Y. World.

Intelligence certainly is not a matter either of inches or of yards, or of age or of station. And it is very likely that the small page, whose well-meant endeavor to arbitrate in the quarrel which interrupted the harmony of Mr. Weller's "swarrry" at Bath was ignominiously snubbed by a haughty hall porter, in red plush breeches and white silk stockings, with the exclamation, "Buttons, you be blowed!" may really have been an unappreciated Daniel come to judgment. But the snub was none the less effectual. "Buttons" subsided, at his great heart in brooding silence, and was heard from no more.

A similar experience has just befallen (we dare say quite as unjustly) one of the "Tribune's" young men, whom it sent out some time ago as its correspondent to England. This young man—finding all England, as he fancied, by the ears about Mr. Reverdy Johnson, and believing the catastrophe to be impending of a satisfactory settlement of the Alabama claims by a wicked old Marylander who drank Madeira and shook hands with Lords and with lords—gallantly rushed into print to interpose himself between Great Britain and her doom. He sent a very long letter to a very "liberal" London paper, the Daily News. In this letter he set forth, in a most impressive manner, the awful consequences which must ensue to the whole British realm if Englishmen went on denouncing themselves into the belief that the American Minister in England either spoke the truth, believed in his Maker, represented his country, or so much as knew the difference between chalk and cheese. He cited the Tribune and his own correspondence with the words and ways of this recreant old Marylander, who deserved no better than he got when he was born to be named Johnson. And he wound up by warning all and sundry the dukes, marquises, earls, viscounts, and barons, the knights and burghers, the gentlemen and the squires, the merchants, manufacturers, butchers, bakers, and confectioners of the three kingdoms, that any further "civilities" extended by them or by any of them, in their public, private, corporate, or individual capacities, to the aforesaid Marylander, would be regarded by every patriotic American as an insult offered to the Union.

Will it be believed that this most earnest and ingenious remonstrance, conceived, as every one must see, in the highest spirit of American nationality and best respect, and brought forth in the purest good-will to Britain, provoked from the self-boasted and beer-branded dukes of the British press no more civil reply than, "Buttons, you be blowed!"

Yet such is the melancholy fact! Of course, one might have expected the venal creatures who hang about the tables of the aristocracy—the Tory panderers to the diabolical machinations of a Disraeli—to vent their spite in this insolent fashion upon a meek and lowly follower of the soft-spoken H. G. and the gentle Thaddeus Stevens. But the Daily News itself, which is the faithful vane of Mr. Gladstone's many wholesome winds of doctrine, and the Manchester Guardian, which speaks with the voice of John Bright, were first and foremost in the derisive outcry. Nay, no sooner had the man of the Tribune announced that any further civilities to Mr. Reverdy Johnson would be an insult to the Union, than John Bright himself actually went down to meet that aged diplomatic reprobate at dinner in Birmingham, and called him his friend in public, and declared that it was an honor to be with him! There is even reason to believe, we fear, that Mr. Bright went so far as to take "in friendly grasp" the hand which had once closed amicably upon the digits, instead of angrily upon the ears, of the three-damnable Alabama Laird! Could there be a more emphatic way of saying "Buttons, you be blowed!" than this?

What the Tribune will do about it does not yet appear. But there can be no doubt that the "blackheads" of the Loyal League owe it to themselves, their order, and H. G. to call a meeting on the subject at once. H. G. to call, of course, will never condescend now to accept the mission to Great Britain. And the loil pulpit of the land will be false to its high calling if it do not denounce, in thunder tones, this wretched recreancy of liberal England—this sale of the birthright of the elect for a miserable mess of diplomatic porridge.

Work for Colfax.

From the N. Y. World.

If Congress can spare seven "national" legislators to look after the political affairs of this "national metropolis" of New York, cannot the army headquarters spare one brigadier to reconstruct the disorganized State of Indiana? It is perfectly obvious that Indiana needs reconstruction at least as badly as Texas. If Texas is ruled by the "Ku-Klux," Indiana is ruled by "Vigilance Committees." Probably it makes very little difference to a man who is unlawfully hanged whether he be hanged by a "Ku-Klux" or by a "Vigilance Committee," and just as little whether he look his last on life from the banks of the Rio Grande or from those of the Ohio. Our domestic order and our foreign relations are equally menaced in both cases. It is quite possible that the Ku-Klux—if there really are any Ku-Klux in Texas—may one of these days catch and strangle a stray "grass" from Mexico; and it is quite certain that the Indiana "Vigilants" have already caught and strangled a person surrendered by the British Government to American justice, on the strength of a treaty which never would have been made by England had not English statesmen supposed the United States to be a civilized and responsible power. Now, Mr. Schuyler Colfax, of Indiana—whose habitual smile, like the discourse of Plato, might woo bees from a clover field, and who is at present rising in the double honorem of an elect Vice-President and an elected brigadier-general—made a characteristically mellifluous speech at the New Englanders on Tuesday evening, in the course of which he became positively ecstatic about the privileges and the potency of "American citizenship." He thought that "American citizenship" had "been stamped by the approval of the Divinity"; also, that we should "consecrate it in our hearts like the vestal fire of the ancients." Also, he thought it "should enable our ambassadors to stand unabashed in the shadow of the thrones of the Old World." Also, that it would lift America to a prouder position among the nations of the world. Also, that it "is to allow it to sweep onward in the van of the march of empires and of nations, as our great principles, triumphant here, are even now impressing the monarchs of the Old World with the doctrine that throughout this globe the people must rule." Also, that it should "make American citizenship as potential in Texas as in the city of New York."

By all means, most noble Colfax! When we saw you swing off into space in this astounding fashion on your rhetorical trapeze, like a bolder Leotard or a more aerial Indian, Brother, we were dazed to hope you would land upon a safe and practical conclusion. We are with you heartily for "making American citizenship as potential in Texas as in New York." But are you with us to make it as "potential" in your own State of Indiana as in New York? And if so, how?

Your way of making "American citizenship potential in Texas" is to declare Texas a province by act of Congress, and to put Texas under tutelage, and to disfranchise its citizens, and to send down soldiers and a brigadier to rule over them; and all this on the pretense that "American citizenship in Texas" will not otherwise be "potential" enough to secure "order" and the "due administration of justice." On a like pretense, you propose to put "American citizenship" in New York under the supervision of a Congressional committee, who are to see that we do not emasculate our citizenship, without knowing it, by our incapacity of regulating our own elections and protecting ourselves against fraud upon the suffrage. If this method be a wise method with Texas and with New York, why not with Indiana?

It is notorious, as we have said, that "order" and the "due administration of justice" are highly perturbed in Indiana to-day. We believe, too, that there were some very queer things done at the polls in Indiana last fall, when by Indiana law the Governor electing as her Governor the ablest statesman who represents her in the "national" councils. But we will deal with one thing at a time, most noble Colfax! You cannot desire to have the "national" honor smirched, "order" broken up, the "due administration of justice" made impossible in Indiana. You must long to "see American citizenship as potential" in your adopted as in your native State. How will you set about it? Will you vote for the appointment of a Congressional committee to visit Indiana, with power to send for persons and papers, and with orders to ascertain how it comes to pass that the radical authorities of Indiana are unable to enforce the laws of that State, and to prevent the flag and faith of the United States from being trampled underfoot by brutal and irresponsible mobs? Will you vote for a bill putting Indiana under the authority of the "General of the Armies," and requesting that eminent personage to appoint a brigadier with power to see order maintained and the laws enforced?

Will you do either, or both, or neither of these things? And if neither, will you be so good as to cease your acrobatic perform-ances over the heads of the "monarchs of the Old World," and the "despotisms and aristocracies generally, until such time as "American citizenship in Texas" shall have become "potential" enough to protect itself against an unscrupulous and unconstitutional military tyranny, and "American citizenship in New York" sacred enough to command the respect and repel the intermeddling of a knot of impertinent fanatics calling themselves the majority of a "National Congress"?

A European Conference.

From the N. Y. Tribune.

It may now be regarded as certain that the Eastern complication will, for the present, not lead to war. The Czar of Russia, supported by the King of Prussia, has proposed to the other great powers the holding of a European Conference for a pacific solution of the intricate question, and the proposition is said to have been received with general favor, and to be sure of execution. The frequent meeting of European conferences for settling difficult international questions of this kind is one of the most hopeful features of the recent history of Europe. They have more than once averted bloody wars, and are creating a general disposition, before rushing to war, to make the utmost efforts for a peaceful compromise. With regard to the Turkish question, a European conference is likely to recommend to the Turks new concessions in favor of the Christians. A redress of all or even of the principal grievances of the Christian subjects of the Porte is out of the question, as it would involve a dissolution of the Turkish empire, to which for the present France and Austria would refuse to give their consent. The conference, therefore, while it is likely to effect a postponement of hostilities, cannot be expected to find an instant remedy for the decline of the Turkish rule.

Prussia and the Eastern Question—A General Conference.

From the N. Y. Herald.

From London, Paris, and Berlin our cable despatches assure us of a European Conference on the Eastern question, and that the initial movements come from Prussia and Russia. We are in this the presence and the brains of Count Bismarck. The Eastern question really has become

serious. Greece is preparing for war. The sympathy of Russia with Greece and with the Christians of Turkey is already so pronounced that there can be no doubt as to the tendency of Russian sentiment. It does not mean nothing that Russia has ordered her flag to be used for Grecian purposes. It grants to Greece the favor that the Western Powers have denied. A European war is, therefore, rendered the more a possibility. No power in Europe has more to gain by peace and less to gain by war than Prussia. War creates dangers and involves heavy expenses. Peace has for Prussia, in particular, easy and certain conquests. Count Bismarck knows the fact, and, as it appears, is not slow to make use of the opportunity to advance the cause with which his name must be lastingly associated. Austria and Italy are tied up by their debts and their dangers, and hence they readily side with Prussia.

This Conference, in fact, means to us on this side two things. It means, first of all, that, unless the great powers interpose to prevent it, the difficulty between Turkey and Greece contains within it the germs of a European war. It means, secondly, that the honor of settling European difficulties shall no longer belong exclusively to Paris and to the Emperor Napoleon. In other words, it proves that just as Bismarck played off Napoleon on the nationalities question and made that question as much his own as Napoleon's, so does he now intend to play off France on what we may call the Paris question, and make Berlin, so far as he can, the Paris of the future.

What will Napoleon do? To him this proposal must be a surprise. In his estimation he and Paris, not Clarendon and London, not Bismarck and Berlin, ought to have settled this fresh Eastern difficulty. What will Napoleon do? He does not want war; he does not, he cannot object to a congress. If a congress is good in itself, it ought to be as good in Berlin as in Paris. It is, after all, a new phase of the question. It begets new difficulties, while it does not mitigate the severe character of the old. How the affair will end it is hard to say. Meanwhile it is not easy to resist the conviction that Bismarck has stolen a march on Napoleon, and that Prussia and Russia have taken the role of France.

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